M 382 dignitaries and their families, but it was impossible for us to 789 prove the accuracy of our hypothesis. When questioned about this, the natives always confined themselves to uncertain and evasive replies. The native chief rarely appears at a large gathering without having his face and sometimes his arms and chest covered with lines drawn with mpembe. At all official receptions, the chief, a few dignitaries, and sometimes some of the chiefs' wives had a more or less symmetrical rectangle drawn with mpembe around the eyes.

M 304 312 We observed the following artificial deformations in the course of our journey:

1) depilation;
2) filing of the teeth;
3) tattooing by incision;
4) circumcision.

M 382 Depilation is practiced by all the peoples of the regions visited. The native plucks out every last hair on his body. Where the hair cannot be plucked, it is shaved with great care. For the parts of the body that are hard to reach, men and women help one another. Eyebrows and eyelashes are both plucked, while beards and mustaches, on the other hand, are cared for with great pride. It is very unusual to see a full beard. We ran across only one such case. The happy possessor of this beautiful [172] beard was as proud of it as he could be, and Natali, chief of the Banfumu of Kwamouth, was heartbroken to have only a few hairs on his chin while one of his dignitaries was endowed with such a fine beard.

T 382 Among the Bateke-Banfumu peoples, up to the Ipanga, the natives frequently shave the base of their scalp all around the head. Their headdress looks like a very symmetrical calotte.

M 382 Among the Yaelima we encountered men whose heads were completely shaved except for one strip just above the nape of the neck. A similar custom must have prevailed among the Bateke and Banfumu, but the unshaved part was broader.

Among the Yaelima and up to the region of the Bankuthu north of Bena Dibele, the natives shave their hair in such a way

L: Mac--190 E-5 (1913-1914) 1924 FO32 Mongo FO32
Sakata F043
Teke F133

M 302

as to broaden the forehead. The brow is sharply delineated at right angles and framed by two corners projecting over the temples.

M 302 534

Let us note that the custom of shaving part of the scalp is hardly a general one. The types of headdress we have just described are seen regularly, but by no means are worn by all the natives. It even seemed to us that they tend to be the prerogative of the chiefs, dignitaries, and their families, but we dare not assert that they constitute a right, a strict prerogative. [176]

S 302 301 142]

Fig. 93. Betete Type with Long Beard, Plucked Eyelashes and Eyebrows.

M S 304

The Betete and Banfumu file the middle upper incisors in the shape of an isosceles triangle, break them, or pull them out. We observed this custom among some of the Baboma. The majority of the Baboma, however, have their teeth filed to a point, a custom that prevails up to the Bokala region and along the north bank of the Kasai up to 23° longitude east of Greenwich. "Basongo-Meno" seems to mean "people with filed teeth" and may have

M 304

304 been the name used by the southern peoples to designate their neighbors to the north whose real name they did not know. The custom of deforming the teeth tends to disappear rapidly. The younger generation already refuses to submit to it, and we often heard the natives with filed teeth referred to as bawangi, that is, "savages." The deformation of the teeth is accomplished with a small iron chisel and a wooden mallet. The village blacksmith does this for a small fee. The teeth are broken with short, sharp blows while the patient is seated with his head against the knees of the blacksmith, who stands behind the patient. The operation is very painful and takes several sittings. The last ones are for the filing, which is done with a small native file.

324

302 The native takes special pains with his hairdo, which sometimes is a true little marvel, the fruit of long and patient work.

Both men and women attach great importance to this. They strive [171] to surpass themselves and to achieve the most coquettish coiffure possible. Since every native is a born hair stylist and they aid each other with complete unselfishness, the hairdo not only varies from one tribe to another, but the most disparate types are found within the same tribe, according to our observation.

Fig. 94. A Baloza with a Small Goatee and with Eyelashes and Eyebrows Carefully Plucked.

A very popular method is to smear the hair with a rather thick paste of palm oil and ngula and then to separate the locks and roll them up so that they form small, very irregular balls. To enhance this hairdo, the native does not hesitate to insert peanuts into the hair, first smearing them carefully with ngula paste in order to conceal the deception.

382. Reforming most of the statuettes, figurines and bowls that we possess from this region, which are so remarkably decorated. Moreover, we find these same forms among the Bekuba and Bashilele, up to the region of the Bambombo of Bena Dibele-Kole. These various tribes have also reproduced in their sculpture the designs of the shaved parts of the head, which are so uniform and so characteristic. In this respect these various tribes are related, and their ethnic affinity seems very clear. Despite their present remoteness from each other and the absence of all tribal intercourse, their ethnic kinship is clearly shown in the [illegible]

[192 384]

Fig. 199. Hairdos and Tattoos of Lake Leopold II.

have preserved of the ancestral culture.

382. 161 These various observations permit us to divide the peoples into three very distinct groups.

1) The Betsike-Banfumu group, with its chignon hairdo over the nape of the neck and the rest of the head shaved or with the hair cut short.

2) The group including the Ipanga and the eastern peoples, with their hairdo of two braids passing behind the ears and under the chin and the upright roll on top of the head. [179]

3) The group including the tribes of Lake Leopold II and the lower Lukenie up to the Ipanga region, where having the hair arranged in tiny braids predominates.

301 The love of finery is more or less developed among all the peoples of the Kasai-Lake Leopold II-Lukenie region. Ornaments

L. Mam--044 E-5 (1913-1914) 1924 FO32 Mongo FO32
Yaelima

reserved to the Mfumu. The large royal knife, encased in a sheath, hung from a brass chain worn diagonally over the shoulder, and Kahua [187] never parted with his great bow and his quiver of arrows with large iron heads.

693
293
301

[304
301
535]

Fig. 189. Dancing Costume of the Yaelima-Bekala of the Wumbulli Region. Tattooing on the Back.

During dances and ceremonies the women attach the most unusual objects around their waists, often large bushy branches. Among the Ipanga and Betitu, as well as in the region of Wumbulli and Dukese, betrothal and wedding dances are executed in special attire, heavily bedecked with beads and cowries.

293
301
535

These ornaments are not at all consistent. They vary according to taste and the whims and means of the natives, but certain parts of the dress costume worn by the betrothed couple at the dances celebrating the engagement seem to have a special meaning, to which we shall return later.

L: Maes--145 E-5 (1913-1914) 1924 FOR2 Mongo FOR2
Take FT37
Sakata F043

M
304

From Leopoldville to Kole the peoples know and practice tattooing. This varies, however, from one region to another in motif and design, the symmetry of application, its ceremoniousness, and the manner of execution.

T
304

Among the Bezeke and Banfumungo, we noted two distinct tattoonings: that of the men and that of the women. [188]

For the men, the face is covered with striated, parallel lines,

S
[304]

Fig. 110. Tribal Tattooing Executed by a Man, Wadia Tribe.

Fig. 111. Ornamental Tattooing Executed by a Woman, Wadia Tribe.

irregular, slightly concave, shallow, and covering the cheeks from the temples to near the chin. For the women, there is no facial tattooing, but the abdominal region is symmetrically covered with small lines or elongated dots in relief, placed side by side and covering the whole region extending from the pit of the stomach to the lower abdomen.

The males are tattooed by simple incisions, usually made at the age of seven or eight as manhood draws near. Women are tattooed at all ages.

M
304
832

Prior to our [Ed., European] penetration of the region, a young girl was tattooed before puberty, according to the information we obtained. There was a twofold reason for this: to satisfy

[text continues on p. 147]

304 132 [111 291] personal vanity, and to excite the male. At the present time only the latter reason accounts for the practice in the region where our influence has been effective. The introduction of European fabrics, the expansion of the economy and the progress of civilization have led the women to clothe themselves and to hide and screen a large part of the body from indiscreet glances. [189] The small primitive loincloth has given way to a tuga of variable length, which hides from the public eye that part [Fig. 112 appears here] of the body which is covered with tattoos. In

[291 301 304 142]

Fig. 115. Elegant Lady of the Bokala-Yaelima Region. Tattoos, Bracelets, and Necklaces.

such cases, the woman can no longer display her tattoos for the sake of vanity. [Figs. 113 and 114 appear here] If, despite this, some of them continue to have themselves tattooed just like the old matrons, it is because they hope to attract a man, to please him, and to be able to participate sooner in the pleasures of intimate life. When questioned on this subject, the natives are very definite. The men maintain that the raised tattoos [190] on

304 133

certain parts of the female body is very exciting to them, essentially as a result of the very pronounced movements of the woman during sexual contact. This explanation, which according to the natives seems to be the only reason for tattooing the women of certain tribes (this applies, in our opinion, to the Bonke, Bondjongo, Bakoma, and, up to a certain point, to all the riparian peoples of Lake Leopold II), also enables us to explain the special character of the tattooing of Yaelima women. It extends all around the mons Veneris, follows the fold of the groin, and continues in concentric circles on the inside of the upper thighs. The tattoo scars on these parts of the woman's body are usually more symmetrical and in more pronounced relief, and these characteristics increase in direct proportion to the nearness of the pubic region. Coquetry cannot be the reason for making these raised scars. Their presence is largely hidden, even by the flimsiest and most primitive loincloth. Among certain tribes, the loincloth completely covers this part of the body, and since native women exercise a great deal of care and modesty in hiding these tattoos from the public eye, it was only with great difficulty that we were able to verify their existence. Let us note in passing that despite earnest endeavors, we never were able to persuade a native woman of the interior to be photographed without her loincloth. The civilized women, whether local demimondaines or housewives, were, it is true, less [191] timid. The natives themselves make a distinction between these tattoos and those which appear on other parts of the body, notably on the arms, back, and face.

Tattoos on the back, arms, and throat are always essentially decorative. We found them especially on the women, who are coquettish by nature even among the most primitive peoples. These tattoos generally lack the characteristic uniformity which is such a clear mark of the racial tattoos. The latter are found in their most characteristic form on the men, particularly on the forehead, temples, cheeks, and sometimes the chest. Among certain tribes, the women have also taken over this artificial deformation peculiar to the men. Elsewhere, the women have special tattoos which are clearly distinct from those of the men, and, finally, among some peoples the women have no racial tattoos.

L. Mam--140 E-5 (1913-1914) 1924 FC082 Mongo FC082
Sakata Fon's
Tofa FI33
M
I
304
17

We have seen earlier that among the Bamba, Bafumungu, and Bakuma, the men's characteristic tattoo consists of lines scratched on the face, while that of the women consists of small dots in relief, juxtaposed in parallel lines, more or less horizontal, covering the body from the pit of the stomach to the lower abdomen. This same design [132] is found among the women of all the riparian peoples of Lake Leopold II and among the tribes of the Lukenie up to the Bumbuli sector. It must be noted, however, that in this last region the relief is less clear and less pronounced.

M
304
N1
[40]

Fig. 116. Tattooing among the Women of Lake Leopold II and the Lower Lukenie.

Moreover, as a general rule, the relief gradually decreases as one goes farther from the lake. In this respect, then, all these peoples seem to belong to the same ethnic group, and it is probable that this characteristic tattooing is one of the traits of the ancestral civilization, retained until the present time by all

L Mam--150 E-6 (1919-1924) 1924 FOR2 Mongo FOR2
Skats FOR3

M 304 171

the transition of the original group despite migrations and displacements. In the same region, the tattoo of the men is a small rosette, consisting of a large central dot and two or three concentric circles in relief, decorating the temples. In the region north of Lake Leopold II, the native usually adds to this a line of small dots all across the forehead.

M S 304

Among the Tumbe, Mbesengere, Wedie, and Basakata-Bateke-Balese, on the other hand, this line is replaced by a series of small incisions in relief which form a little cock's crest in the hollow at the root of the nose.

Fig. 117. Betto-Ipanga Tattoos.

Among all these tribes the woman has also adopted the racial tattoo, although it must be noted that we quite often met women with no tattooing on their faces, while others had the rosette alone, the rosette [180] and the cock's crest, or the line crossing the forehead, and sometimes the three tattoos were combined.

This irregularity in the application of facial tattoos leads us to suppose that this tattooing is more a matter of vanity for the women of these various tribes than a practice imposed by the usages and customs, while for the men this artificial deformation is a true distinguishing mark imposed by local tradition.

M 304

Among the Ipanga and Betto, tattoos include designs on the face and on the breastbone. The chest tattoo consists of a vertical line of small linear scars, obliquely parallel and slightly

I: Mam--111 F-5 (1913-1914)-1924 FOB2 Mongo FOB2
Yaelima

bear running from the top of the breasthone to the navel. To the left and right of this main line we see a double row of small oblique lines separated from each other by a space from one to three centimeters wide. The facial tatto consists of a double or triple row of oblique lines, arranged in such a way that they look like palm leaves, and a small crest formed by short, curved incisions at the root of the nose. According to a photograph sent by Mr. Timmermans this same type of tattoo is also found among

[622
142]

Fig. 118. Imma, the Young and Excellently Endowed Batitu Chief of the Obiwe Region.

the Yaelima. We ought to note in this connection that in the course of our journey [194] through this region we did not observe this anywhere, despite numerous investigations. We therefore believe that an error was made in transmitting the information. The persons involved were probably Ipanga-Batitu who happened to be in the Yaelima region.

I: Mean--192 E-5 (1913-1914) 1924 FOS2 Mongo FOS2

304
189

The tattoos of Ipanga and Batito women differ considerably from those of the men, except for the facial designs. The lines of small dots that we observed and described for the women among the western peoples are quite widespread throughout the region. On certain women these scars are not only found on the abdomen and upper thighs, but they decorate the whole body and sometimes even the arms.

In the region of the Ombwe sector, especially near the eastern limits of the territory occupied by the Batito, we encountered, moreover, several women whose tattoos were notably different from those of their sisters to the west. The palm-leaf designs on the temples are replaced by a series of concentric circles around a small dot in strong relief. This dot is placed half-way between the eye and the ear. These women were probably not natives of the region. In our opinion, they had come in through trade or even through abduction. They probably belonged to the Bokala or Yaelima tribe, although we were unable

Fig. 119. Tattoos of the Lake Leopold II Tribes.

to get confirmation of this from the natives. Among these [195] latter tribes, tattooing is very much in fashion. The women in particular seem to be very fond of this type of ornamentation.

304 The designs are so many and varied that we could not attempt to provide a detailed description of them. We believe that we may divide them, on the whole, into three main classes or categories.

1) The racial or tribal tattoo.

Yaelima

This consists of a set of small curves drawn above the root of the nose, similar to those we previously noted among the Ipanga-Batitu, but usually sharper and more pronounced. This identical and characteristic motif seems to establish an affinity between these two groups, but it must be noted that the motif on the temples varies considerably from one region to another. Here we find again the rosette of the peoples of Lake Leopold II, although much larger. The concentric circles cover the temples, and very often they extend over a wider area as arcs, always concentric, are added above the cheeks. 304●

Both men and women have adopted this tattoo.

2) Sexual tattoos, reserved for women. 304 833

These consist of scars in relief which are found on all parts of the body from just above and between the breasts to the middle of the thighs.

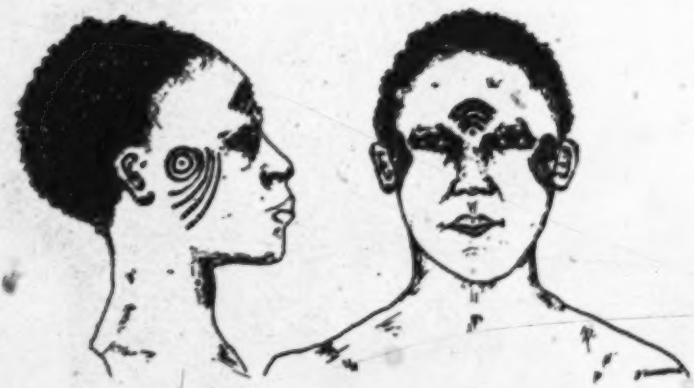

Fig. 120. Bokala-Yaelima Tattoos.

3) Ornamental or coquettish tattoos. [196] 304

These extend irregularly over all the other parts of the body, including the arms and back.

The tattoos in the second category form a series of concentric, rounded triangles whose tip is actually the mons Veneris. 304 833

The designs between the breasts and the navel vary considerably from one person to another. The rosettes and palm-leaf motif clearly predominate. The man does not use this type of tattoo, but the woman, on the other hand, takes a great deal of

1: Maes--154 E-5 (1913-1914) 1924 FO32 Mongo FO32
Dengese FO 16

M
304
833

pains with it, from which we may conclude that her chief aim is a heightening of sensation in sexual relations.

M
304

The motifs or designs in the third category are extremely varied [197] and most irregular, as we noted earlier. Aside from the concentric rosette, we saw the most varied designs: small dots, stippled lines, crescents, diamond shapes, palm-leaf motifs, and other figures cross, cut into each other, are superimposed on each other, and are mixed in such a way that the scars seem to have been scattered at random all over the body.

Men and women both have adopted these designs, but the

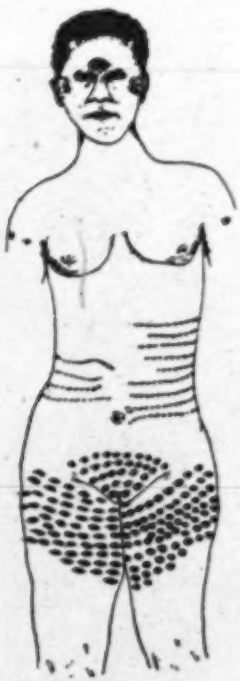

Fig. 121. Ipanga-Batitu Tattoos.

Fig. 122. Bokala-Yaelima Tattoos.

M
D
304

woman seems to be especially fond of them. In this respect the Bokala and Yaelima differ sharply from their neighbors to the west, but seem to resemble closely the tribes to the east, especially the peoples of the Dekese region. Photographs sent by Mr. Van den Broeck and designated as Dengese show us the undeniable

1: Maes--155 E-5 (1913-1914) 1924 FO32 Mongo FO32
Dengese FO16

D
M
304

likeness of their tattoo designs and those of the Yaelima. Among the Dengese, however, the designs are generally more symmetrical, and the rosette on the temple is smaller and usually framed by two or three lines of small dots, one of which sometimes extends into the forehead. Another figure, no less characteristic, consists of [198] a band of three parallel lines drawn in such a way as to form the native imbolo, which looks like two eights joined horizontally.

This motif is usually drawn above the navel and on the

Fig. 123. Tattoos of the Bokala-Yaelima Woman, Front and Back.

arm, and it is found almost exclusively on women.

Finally, the small scarified dots which adorn the neck of certain Dengese women show us that they are related as much to the eastern peoples as to their neighbors to the west.

The characteristic tattoo of the women of the Bena Dibele-Kole region, Basongo-Meno as well as Bankutshu, consists precisely of these sets of small scarified dots adorning the neck, temples, and forehead. To this must be added the design very often drawn on the upper arm. This motif, consisting of three broken parallel lines arranged in the form of a diamond with the sides shifted out of place, may be justly regarded as a special characteristic of this region.

1: Maes--156 E-5 (1913-1914) 1924 FO32 Mongo FO32
Dangese FO16

D
M
304

Tattoos on the chest and the upper and lower abdomen are less uniformly worn by the women of this region, but where they do exist the design is always outstandingly symmetrical. It is formed by small juxtaposed dots in strong relief.

M
304
171

To sum up, we believe that we may divide the racial tattoos of the various populations we visited into four groups.

The first consists of the tattoo of the Bateke-Banfumungu-Baboma, made with a comb.

The second is characterized by the rosette on the temples and the semi-concentric crest at the root of the nose, and this includes all the riparian peoples of Lake Leopold II and the Lukenie, with the exception of the Ipanga-Batitu.

The third group is distinguished by the semi-concentric crest at the root of the nose and the palm-leaf designs at the temples, which we observed among the Ipanga-Batitu and up to the Bokala region.

Lastly, the fourth group is marked by the small, raised dots with which the woman of the Bena Dibele-Kole region adorns her neck and forehead, as well as by the characteristic figure on the upper arm.

We have noted earlier that, thanks to photographs by Mr. Van den Broech, we were able to verify the fact that the peoples of the Dekese sector are related particularly to their western neighbors as far as tattooing is concerned, although they [199] show strong resemblances to the eastern tribes. Their territory, therefore, should be regarded as a mixed zone or an area of transition between the two ethnic groups.

The study of the different figures of ornamental tattooing permits us to subdivide the region we visited into two large provinves.

The first one includes all the peoples who have few ornamental tattoos, and these few are not very elaborate. In this case, there are no true figures involved, for the tattoos invariably consist of small dots aligned horizontally.

This region extends from Leopoldville to Oshwe.

The second one includes the tribes with highly elaborate ornamental tattoos. This province covers the rest of the region we visited, and its major center is the Yaelima region. The study

1: Maes--157 E-5 (1913-1914) 1924 FO32 Mongo FO32
Yaelima

304
171

we made of the many figures we saw in this region showed us that the variations are so numerous, so diverse, and so closely intertwined that it is totally impossible to use this as a basis for determining ethnic sectors with clearly-defined characteristics.

304
171
833

Finally, if we consider only those tattoo figures to which

[307
142]

Fig. 124. Yaelima Headdress and Tattooing. Typical Longomo or Dignitary.

we attributed, if not a familial origin, at least a familial nature [200] (incitement to sexual relations), we see that throughout the region this type of tattoo is peculiar to women.

From Leopoldville to the confines of Batitu territory and even among some Bokala women, this tattoo consists (where it still exists) of a number of small, aligned dots, just like the ornamental tattoos.

Among the Ipanga-Batitu, these figures sometimes embellish the arms and part of the back, while among the other tribes they are less elaborate.

304 171 833 In the region of the Yaelima, Dengese, and some of the Bokala, this tattoo consists of a series of broken, concentric lines with the pubic region as the main center.

We do not know if this tattoo is also worn by the Basongo-Meno and Bankutshu women, but this seems probable to us. We can, however, assert that among those peoples this tattoo does not extend to the upper thighs, except for one or two lines of small incised dots running parallel to the fold of the groin.

[142] [302]

Fig. 125. Yaelima Tattoing and Headdress Adorned with Peanuts Smeared with Ngula.

The incisions for ornamental and sexual tattoos are usually made by women, although a man sometimes takes over this task.

304 The operation is carried out at very irregular intervals and at practically any [201] time of life. Moreover, it requires several sittings, usually spaced from 10 to 15 days apart.

The tattooing knife, which is also used for depilation, consists of a small, broad iron blade with a curved, very sharp cutting edge.

M
304 The patient is seated. The operator draws the designs or motifs on the body with mpembe. He pinches the skin between his left thumb and forefinger and makes the line with a sharp blow of the lancet. The wound is sprinkled with powdered charcoal, mpembe, and a powder made of dried and crushed tree bark. This mixture slows the healing process. The operation is repeated three or four times until the relief of the raised scars is deemed sufficiently pronounced.

I
S
304 Among the Bateke, Banfumungu, and Baboma, facial tattoos are obtained by scratching or scraping the skin with a sort of iron comb with relatively broad, dull teeth. The operation requires only one sitting among these peoples, and the wounds are not powdered. These two procedures are explained by the difference in these tribes between racial tattoos and the scarified ornamental figures worn by the women. The former are ordinary cicatrized wounds; the latter are raised scars.

M
304 The racial tattoos are always made prior to the other figures. In 1913-14 boys and girls were compelled to have them inscribed before they reached marriageable age.

The familial tattoos are usually begun some time before the girl's marriage, and they are quickly elaborated during the last few weeks preceding the union.

As for the coquettish tattoos or ornamental figures, there seems to be no rule regarding the age at which they are applied. Sometimes even an old woman will not hesitate to acquire new incisions.

M
304
178 It is probable that the custom of tattooing will soon disappear among these peoples. The spread of the principles of European civilization will invariably suppress this primitive custom. [202]

We were able, moreover, to observe this trend during our visit to the villages of the houseboys, laborers, and soldiers of Leopoldville, Kinshasa, and other large centers. In these villages, the children and even the young men are no longer tattooed. The young girls are tattooed only slightly, and in general they have incisions only on the lower abdomen. Racial tattoos are totally lacking. On the other hand, in the villages of the interior, less influenced by the principles of civilization,

304 178 tattoos are very much in vogue at the present time. We concede that the custom of tattooing is now at its height in the region we visited.

It is probable that this custom will not long survive our penetration.

304 174 It would be very difficult to determine the approximate time of its introduction into the life of these natives. We believe, however, that we may regard racial tattoos as one of the ethnic characteristics peculiar to the contemporary culture and not as a specific custom of the ancestral civilization, transmitted from generation to generation and preserved or even elaborated by

Fig. 126. Return from the Fields.

each one. The clearest proof of this fact comes from our observations of the present generation of old men. As a rule they have no racial tattoos. The old women who have no [203] trace of ornamental or ethnic tattooing are rarer. Ornamental incisions are more often lacking than tribal scars, and we encountered only rare cases where the sexual tattoos were lacking.

304
174

These facts prove that when the elders of the present generation were young, tattooing, if it was customary, was practiced with some regularity only by the women and originally had an essentially familial character in this region.

304
152

A woman bears the pain of the incisions without showing the least sign of suffering, without a complaint or a sigh. She even submits to this custom with some joy, mixed with a bit of pride, knowing that she will be held in higher esteem by the man.

This point, in our opinion, is much more important to the women among primitive peoples than one would generally suppose. It appears to us to be the leitmotiv of the major part of the variations that we observed in the grooming of the native woman.

The anxiety to please, the wishes of the man, these lead the woman to seek constantly the means that would enable her to be tattooed as soon and as often as possible. This natural desire and inner necessity are the reasons why the woman stoically bears all the torture, all the suffering. In primitive life the sexual side naturally is dominant. In this way we can explain, and in a way understand, why tattooing in the beginning was the exclusive appanage of the woman in this region and how she came to decorate the sexual organ and its immediate vicinity in order subsequently to display it; covering nearly all the body with decorations came about, perhaps, simply through coquetry.

856 864 During a girl's early childhood beginning when she is still nursing, a mother with foresight will work to make her organs as perfect as possible. By applying pressure repeatedly and for long periods, she molds, so to speak, the outside in order to make it narrow, as this quality is greatly valued by our people.

It is the mother, too, who trains the girl in her preparations for married life. She teaches her how to behave toward her future husband, and at the same time instructs her in the duties of a good housewife (see Chapter X, Article VIII).

836 864 Certain forms of behavior, although their relationship to our subject is only superficial and external, must nevertheless be mentioned. An adult man will often take in his arms a little girl who has not yet been weaned, or perhaps only slightly more developed. He considers this child to be his wife. He has paid no bride price for her. But since she is a sister, cousin, or other relative of one of his wives, she is a "wife" from his point of view; that is, not only will it be possible for him to marry her later on, but even without becoming her husband he will enjoy a certain liberty in relation to her. (1) Thus, when such a man takes his young "wife" in his arms,

1. See Chapter VI, Article V, 2.

he is enjoying an anticipation of the future and speaks to her [66] in that sense, often accompanying his words with intimate caresses.

The same practice, mutatis mutandis, may be observed on the part of a woman toward a small boy whom she can consider as her "husband."

304 582 2. Circumcision

Circumcision is generally practiced. It is usually performed at an early age. Without going into the details at this point (1) or

1. They will be found in Chapter X, Article VII.

304 582 wishing to commit myself on the reason for this custom, it is a fact that a Nkundó woman will refuse to marry a man who has not been circumcised. Consequently, all the natives want to undergo this operation. That is the reply given by the natives when we asked about the reason for circumcision. When we pushed the inquiry further, they added that the women abhor the deposits that form under the foreskin. I mention this explanation for what it's worth. Nevertheless, this may really be the reason that impels them.

In any case circumcision would seem to have no religious or initiatory significance.

304 932 3. Tattooing

Two kinds of tattoos exist among the Nkundó: purely ornamental tattoos and sexual tattoos. (2) The latter are to be found only on women. The [67] designs are located on portions of the body surrounding the sex organs and even on the outside of the latter.

[619]

2. I will not discuss tribal tattoos because these do not seem to exist among the Nkundó. The reasons for tattooing vary from people to people and from group to group. It is for this reason that they are a distinctive mark. But that does not mean that such is their purpose. The distinctions apparent among the tattoos of various tribes are not an objective but a consequence, as are, for example, the variations among national costumes in Europe. Moreover, the contacts of our people in peace or war have extended by and large only to neighboring clans or tribes, who use the same type of ornamentation as they did. And in these encounters dialect differences serve as a much better means of identification.

304
832 What brings the Nkundó to practice this second form of tattooing? First of all the following considerations must be taken into account: since a woman is by nature more eager than the man to appear beautiful, it seems altogether appropriate that her tattoos should be more abundant, more elaborate than the man's. And since coquetry is a form of the desire to appeal to the opposite sex and since members of the latter are susceptible to it, the tattoos attract them. Therefore, too, the women's tattoos have been most elaborated on those parts of her body which are nearest the sex organs.

The reason for the existence of these tattoos may be that they add additional pleasure to intercourse. (1) This explanation does not

1. This is the explanation given, for example, by Dr. J. Maes in Notes sur les Populations des Bassins du Kasai, de la Lukenie et du lac Léopold II (Notes Concerning the Peoples of the Kasai and Lukenie Basins and of Lake Leopold II), p. 189 ff.

seem entirely implausible. I have never been able to obtain a clear-cut or direct confirmation of this point, but it is a fact that a man sometimes makes malicious remarks to his wife if she is not sufficiently tattooed to his taste ("You, your body is as smooth as a man's"). This fact lends considerable validity to the explanation given. The persistence of these tattoos in spite of modern dress also makes it convincing, although the evidence is not entirely conclusive, considering that its significance is not diminished by the psychological explanation that follows.

The figures are placed in such a way that they converge toward the sex organ. Moreover, the men see the tattooing at some time or other, either in its entirety or in part. Clothing may cover them more or less, but at some time for one reason or another the woman uncovers them, if only partially. [68] The imagination works on what is seen and quite naturally arouses sexual desire. The accuracy of this psychological explanation can be verified even in Europe; one is tempted particularly by what one has only glimpsed,

304 and "modern" fashions, as well as some ancient ones, take this into
832 account. In the next paragraph, moreover, we will note ananalogous phenomenon.

Both of the explanations given can be defended, since each has its value. But it seems to me preferable not to oppose them but rather to bring them together, as they probably are in the thinking of the native.

It should also be noted that a man never performs the operation of making a sexual tattoo on a woman, although a woman may indeed operate on a man. And finally it should be mentioned that the [831] specific terms designating these tattoos are considered as obscenities.

The practice of tattooing is decreasing at the present time. [178] Many boys are already without tattoos. But very few girls lack them; among them the fad has not disappeared. Some even have themselves tattooed without the knowledge of their parents and in spite of their opposition. Among the Blacks, as everywhere in the world, fashion is deeply rooted because it is natural. But the designs of the tattoos are now becoming smaller. It seems to me that this change is due, not to a reaction against tattooing as such, but rather to a modification of the style. For tattooing is a real fashion, and like all fashions it is subject to change and development. Nowadays there is a tendency to imitate the designs of other peoples of the Congo. Elsewhere, as among the Injɔlɔ, for example, an internal evolution may be observed, although it is occurring under foreign influence. The evolution is taking place chiefly in the face motifs, while those of the body are beginning to be omitted. But the sexual tattoos do not seem to be disappearing. [69]

4. Bead Belts

291 From an early age the Nkundɔ child is adorned with a belt of
901 trading beads. Before the coming of the Europeans this decoration
832 made its appearance only towards puberty and was restricted to girls. Nowadays, many men also adorn themselves in this manner. And since it is now easier to obtain the beads, women are no longer with a single string but wear several in assorted colors. They add smaller ones below the knee.

593x 606 578 We should add that in some households, difficulties arise rather easily during the visits of parents or parents-in-law, because of the sensibilities, incompatibility of character, or discontent of one party who may consider the other guilty of discourtesy, lack of delicacy, disrespect, or stinginess toward the visiting parents. The same is true for the rearing of children. [273]

4. Punishments

593x 578 Nkundó law permits a husband to inflict corporeal punishment (bikúnjwá, sing. ekúnjwá) on his wife, its nature varying with the seriousness of the case. Obviously these sanctions, expressly permitted by law, cannot give rise to claims on the woman's part [576] or result in the obligation to pay a bóóndo. [Editor's note: Unless, of course, the husband -- acting in excess of his rights -- is more violent than the occasion warrants for under such conditions, the wife, supported by her family, attacks the husband, who is then [684] forced to acknowledge the harm he has done and make reparation by means of a bóóndo.] If she is hurt she may claim a supplementary payment called liombo (from the verb bomba) or "bandage" (for the wound); it consists of 5 rings or more, depending on the situation. [826] The loss or breaking of a tooth is considered a serious injury. For this is a real injury to the woman and, in the case of front teeth, to her beauty. (1) Of course, as explained above, the wife will first have

● [304] 1. Because they are filed, the incisors are much less resistant than normal teeth. Teeth filing is practiced for reasons of beauty.

run home, and it is there that the dispute is examined.

593x 578 684 For the sake of a clearer understanding, let us go into a few details concerning the penal stipulations of Nkundó law in relation to the life of a married couple.

Usually, in a simple domestic quarrel, the couple does no more than tell each other some home truths, seasoning their speeches

845 In other respects he is not differentiated from the other two. Greetings are not tripled in the case of triplets.

A child born directly after twins is called Wuteji (from utela, "to repeat"). He is in no way different from other children.

Article VII. Circumcision

Circumcision is generally practiced. It does not have to
304 be performed at any particular age. It is usually done during childhood before the tenth year. The more timorous put it off until puberty or even later. Special customs of individual clans sometimes set a time. Thus, a man of the village of Besombó is not allowed to be circumcised until he has killed an animal at the hunt. On the other hand, the season during which circimcisions are performed is specified: they must take place during the period when the water level is low.

The operation may be perfórmed by any man who is expert at it. It is carried out behind the huts. No one but the boys being operated on and their fathers are present. The boys stand in a group somewhat apart from the proceedings but place themselves so that with their eyes they can follow the treatment to which their companion is being subjected. The patient squats. One of the elderly assistants places his hands over the boy's eyes so that he cannot see what is happening. The person performing the operation has already dug a small pit to catch the blood. He pulls the foreskin, ties it with a string, and then uses ashes to trace the line which must be followed by the empúte knife that is used on such occasions. When the blood has stopped flowing, he chews some bondóngó
[824] pepper (Aframomum . . .) or, preferably, [506] a caudal fin of
[825] the ngolo fish and then spits it onto the wound. The resulting sensation is very painful. But the patient shows that he is brave; for if he cries he is mocked by his companions.

As long as the wound is not healed, the boy must not use
[262] manioc leaves (bangánju) or manioc bread in the preparation of boeombó or lóóto. Nor may he eat the skin, head, or tail of fish.

While the wound is healing, the boy who has been circumcised is cared for, washed, etc., by his mother or, if he has reached